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ABSTRACT

Since its formation in 1976, the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI) has certified over 2600 instructors across Canada. CANSI aims to provide a standard of excellence in certified nordic ski instruction by maintaining uniform and current nordic techniques, to encourage the skiing public to take advantage of the benefits of nordic ski instruction, and to provide supportive and stimulating resources to instructors through networking. A volunteer board of directors represents each of nine geographical regions. Three categories of membership status are available. Noncertification courses include an introduction to nordic ski instruction for school teachers and community members, a precourse for certification candidates, refreshers for existing instructors, and course-conductor briefings. Certification courses are available for various levels of expertise in cross country skiing and telemark skiing. Each CANSI certification course includes instruction, practice, and continuous evaluation in skiing techniques, teaching skills, and technical knowledge. CANSI members have access to various services and instructional resources. CANSI's responses to certification issues explain its gatekeeper role in maintaining instructor quality and conformity across regions, counter perceptions of organizational elitism, note that the underrepresentation of women is gradually changing, examine legal liability issues, and discuss the role of instructor judgment in safety. (SV)

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The Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors Instructor Certification Model

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Abstract—This paper summarizes the certification program of the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors. It covers history, mission, membership, course content and certifiction issuses.

History

CANSI formed in 1976, influenced by cross country ski instruction programs of the Canadian Ski Association (CSA), the Canadian Ski Instructor's Alliance (CSIA), and Ski Quebec. Over its history, CANSI has provided leadership and training in ski instruction in classic and telemark techniques, and more recently in ski skating. Since its inception, CANSI has certified over 2600 instructors, in every province and territory in Canada.

Mission Statement

- The mission statement of CANSI is:

  To provide leadership in the development and communication of innovative teaching and technical standards for people involved in nordic ski instruction which fosters quality learning experiences.

- The objectives of CANSI are:

  1. To provide a standard of excellence in certified nordic ski instruction by maintaining uniform and current nordic techniques and by delivering nationally accepted pedagogy to the skiing public.

  2. To encourage the skiing public, including people of all ages and abilities, to take advantage of the benefits of nordic ski instruction.

  3. Through a viable and functioning communication network, focusing on technical and pedagogical advancements, to provide supportive and stimulating resources to instructors

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for the benefit of the skiing public.

4. To promote and maintain national and international liaison within the nordic discipline.

Board of Directors

CANSI is directed by a volunteer board of directors, with one board member representing each of nine geographical regions. This board is responsible for the setting of policy and budgets. The organization is administered on a day to day basis by a part time executive director.

Each region is also represented by a technical representative (who may be the same individual as the board member for that region). This individual attends an annual national technical briefing and in turn, brings new teaching and technical innovations and standards back to the regional briefings they run in their area. Anyone conducting certification courses must attend a regional examiner's briefing, where they are updated by their regional technical director.

Membership

Members are free to select one of three different categories of membership status:

1. Active - full privileges including insurance, voting, newsletters, etc.
2. Associate - all privileges except insurance
3. Affiliate - newsletter only

CANSI has certified over 5000 instructors over its 16 year history and currently has about 850 paid members in all categories. The vast majority of these are active members.

Non-Certification Courses

As part of its fundamental commitment to helping develop and maintain instructional leadership in cross country skiing in Canada, CANSI runs a variety of non-certification courses, including:

Introduction to Instruction

A one day course for school teachers, community members and others to receive an exposure to the basics of nordic ski instruction.

Level I Pre-course

A two day course designed to help prepare potential CANSI Level I candidates receive instruction and feedback on their skiing and teaching to increase their likelihood of successful completion of their Level I course.

CANSI Refresher

Offered at all levels, refreshers are not recertifications (i.e.. they do not involve any examina tions) but are designed to provide existing instructors with feedback on their teaching and skiing and to update them on new innovations and standards.

Course Conductor's Briefing

Individuals holding a Level III or IV certification who are involved in conducting and/or examining Level I or II courses are required to attend one to two day briefings to receive

feedback on their teaching and skiing and to update them on new innovations, standards and course administration changes.

Telemark Course Conductor's Briefing

Individuals holding a Telemark Course Conductor's certification who are involved in conducting and/or examining Telemark Instructor's courses are required to attend one to two day briefings to receive feedback on their teaching and skiing and to update them on new innovations, standards and course administration changes.

Certification Courses

The purpose of certification courses is to train and examine instructor candidates to ensure they will be comfortable and competent in instructing the techniques they are covering:

Cross Country Skiing

- Master Course Conductor
- Level IV Instructor - 6 day course
- Level III Instructor - 5 day course
- Level II Instructor - 5 day course
- Level I Instructor - 2 day course

Telemark

- Master Course Conductor
- Telemark Course Conductor - 5 day course
- Telemark Instructor - 2 day course

Course Content

In each CANSI certification course, instruction, practice and continuous evaluation occurs in:

1. Skiing - specific techniques identified at the Level attempted to the criteria associated with the Level attempted.

2. Lessons - on two to four teaching episodes, depending on Level attempted. Assessment includes demonstration of:

a) Teaching Skills (e.g., selection and use of appropriate terrain, teaching style, group organization, activity level, communication skills, etc.),

b) Technical Knowledge (e.g., explanation and demonstration of the skill, quantity and quality of

feedback to group and individuals to promote skill development, etc.).

Each ski skill and lesson evaluation are assessed on a marking scale including four points: Excellent, Satisfactory, Marginal and Unsatisfactory. Candidates attempting each Level are allowed one Marginal on their ski items and one Marginal on their teaching items.

Level III and IV candidates must also demonstrate competence in technical analysis and marking (to a mark of 75%) in on-snow and video analysis sessions of themselves and other skiers at or below their Level.

Instructor Support and Resources

CANSI members have access to a variety of services and resources to help them, including:

- *Instructor's Manual for Teaching Nordic Skiing* — an excellent pedagogical manual covering most techniques taught by CANSI
- *How to Cross-Country Ski* Video — a motivational and instructional video
- *X-Citation* Newsletter (4 issues/year) — includes articles on nordic skiing and ski instruction, program updates and events calendars
- Insurance — $2,000,000 per occurrence general and non-owned automobile liability
- Pro-purchase — reductions on equipment and clothing for certified instructors
- Interski — international event held every four years to exchange teaching and skiing ideas. CANSI sends a demo team to participate and share in this major festival and conference.
- Liaison with Cross Country Canada, the Canadian Ski Instructor's Alliance and other organizations involved in the development of skiing in Canada.

Why do we do It? CANSI's Response to Certification Issues

Gatekeeper Role

The focus in CANSI is on both quality and conformity. The association strives to ensure that instructors will have comparable skills to allow for transferability between regions. The vast majority of cross country and telemark ski schools in the industry in Canada require CANSI certification of their instructors. The association has evolved high standards in each of its technical and teaching areas (classical, skating and hill), and places its emphasis at all levels in working with recreational cross country and telemark skiers.

While generally congruent, CANSI standards are not always identical to those of organizations like the National Coaches Certification Program (coaching nordic racers) and the Canadian Ski Instructor's Alliance (instructing downhill). Differences generally emerge only where equipment limitations, trail skiing requirements, participant fitness or other related factors affect transferability.

Many CANSI members confess that they initially took their Level I or even II to improve their own ski technique because there were few good cross country ski instruction programs available. Fortunately for the organization, a significant number of these people later found themselves turned

on to teaching what they had learned. CANSI is still the only organization in Canada providing instructor training and certification in telemark skiing progressions.

Who Certifies?

A Level III certification is needed to examine Level I courses, a Level IV to examine Level II courses and Master Course Conductor status (about 4 people in Canada) is needed to certify Level III or IV candidates. While apprenticeship requirements remain flexible, generally candidates are recommended to conduct or assist on one to two courses to practise their teaching and examination skills before actually examining courses at a given level.

CANSI has not been immune to accusations of it's upper echelon constituting an "Old Boys Club". Earlier in its history, high teaching and technical standards and a dearth of pre-courses led to a high failure rate on first attempts (approaching 50%) and a perception of the existence of pass/fail "quotas". With the introduction of additional levels of certification allowing more gradual progression between levels, this frustration has been largely addressed.

In addition, board and technical directors have generally been Level III and IV instructors, and this group has generally been grossly under represented by women across the country. This is changing. Frequently, these perceptions of elitism have proven overstated, as many regions have experienced difficulty finding any volunteers to sit on the board, let alone worry about their gender. As the association is financially stable, but just, most regions can only afford to send one individual to represent them on the national board and national technical committee. As this individual must be prepared to return to their region to run the course conductor's briefing for that area, they must be advanced instructors themselves, capable of explaining and demonstrating new standards and of assessing other's teaching and skiing abilities at Level I and II.

Legal Liability

CANSI carries a $2,000,000 per occurrence commercial general liability and non-owned automobile insurance policy to cover certified instructors while they are engaged in instructing nordic skiing activities. To date there have been no claims made on this policy, suggesting substantial attention to safety by member instructors. In addition, the CSIA's experience suggests that the programming agency is typically sued first and that their insurance will be claimed against before the instructor's certification insurance becomes accessible by a claimant. To date, no outdoor leadership/ instruction certification agency has ever been successfully sued in Canada. An individual making such a claim against the organization would have to prove that an unsafe technique was taught to the instructor as part of his or her CANSI course training. Other than this somewhat unlikely scenario, as CANSI does not receive any direct financial benefit from the participants taking courses from certified instructors, no direct relationship to the association exists from which a participant could readily make a claim.

While certification is by no means a guarantee of safety, CANSI believes that safe and educationally efficacious instruction techniques can be taught and that this will eventuate in fewer accidents and subsequent lawsuits involving certified instructors. On the contrary, avoiding certification may reflect an attitude of vagueness and unprofessionalism; an, "if I'm not certified, I can't be held to the standard of the certified instructor" attitude. This is not necessarily true. The absence of instructor certification doesn't mean that participants will necessarily assume more physical or legal responsibility for themselves. Where an individual assumes the role of a nordic ski instructor, they will be held to the same standards of care that an individual trained and certified for this role must meet. CANSI is convinced that trained, certified instructors can and do consistently provide better and safer instruction in nordic skiing than untrained, unqualified instructors can, and to this end it strives to increase the pool of capable instructors across the country.

Instructor Judgment

While nordic skiing is often not perceived as physically risky as downhill, a significant number of safety issues must be addressed by instructors. Factors requiring instructor judgment include: terrain selection for teaching, participant readiness to learn specific techniques taught, skier flow (reducing potential for collisions, especially on hillwork), and activity level (sufficient to retain warmth, but not exhaustive). Generally, the consequences of an injury occurring during a cross country or telemark instructional class are not as severe as in a backcountry situation where substantial time and distance to life support networks (e.g., ambulance, hospital, etc.) may complicate the effects of an accident.

CANSI supports adoption of the Skier Safety Code and rules of etiquette by all skiers. It also endeavors to include a wide variety of progressions in activities, skills and terrain demands built into each subsequent level of training. Finally, instructor candidates perform practise teaching and skiing during CANSI courses and refreshers and receive feedback on the safety of their teaching and skiing. Through this process they are also exposed to the modelling of advanced instructors who highlight the need for a safety conscious approach through their words and personal example.

Are Purposes Achieved?

Despite an exceptionally large geographic region (Canada is the largest country in the world!), CANSI instructors have consistently provided the Canadian skiing public with high quality instruction. The organization has provided a high level of interprovincial instructor transferability through its maintenance of high standards for instruction and skiing and through its well-developed communication network (national and regional technical briefings, newsletter, occasional papers, etc.). The safety record of CANSI certified instructors is beyond reproach.

The CANSI pedagogy for instructing nordic skiing has been widely adopted and adapted for teaching skiing and other physical skills. The organization has evolved in its emphasis from a strong orientation toward technical skiing to a greater focus on creative, innovative teaching of ski skills. As a result, CANSI courses reflect a good deal of shared leadership and good times. They are fun and people seek them out as a result of this reputation for enjoyably developing instructional leadership as well as skiing skills.

CANSI is involved in the certification of individual instructors, as opposed to the recognition of individuals graduating from any particular accredited institution's programs. While program accreditation may be the answer in some disciplines, CANSI does not believe it carries much potential in the area of nordic skiing instruction. The reason for this is that CANSI instructors work for too diverse a market, including: schools, universities, colleges, ski schools, ski clubs, camps, youth groups, other community clubs and groups, etc. and none of these institutions or agencies do or should have the exclusive right to deliver instruction in nordic skiing. It's CANSI's goal to get people skiing as part of an active outdoor lifestyle, and this is best accomplished by a broad based, accessible approach, versus a closed shop.

CANSI will continue to promote quality learning experiences in nordic skiing. It remains committed to training (learning for predictable situations) and educating (learning for unpredictable situations) instructors to provide safe, enjoyable, educationally efficacious nordic ski instructional experiences to participants of all ages and ability levels. The organization will work to retain its international reputation as a successful outdoor activity instructor training and certification model, and will continue to grow and evolve as the state of the art and science of nordic skiing and activity skill instruction in general develops.

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